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hampered opportunity for the arrangement of the anniversary exhibit, but, notwithstanding the consequent loss of attendance entailed, and the loss entailed, also, by the Saturday evening closing still in force, the number of visitors for the year, 926,908, was larger than during any year in the Museum history except 1909, when the Hudson-Fulton celebration brought its crowds of visitors to New York and to the Museum. This figure, which shows an increase of 46,865 over that of 1919, was due in a large degree to the attractions of the anniversary loan collections, but it was due, also, to the steady increase in the number of persons who avail themselves of the Instructors' services, the lectures, concerts, story-hours, and Library, and of the opportunities for work in the study rooms and galleries. The total of the attendance of those who come for such purposes was 190,161.

Once more, while acknowledging the generosity of the members, which, as has been said, has been greater than ever before, and the action of the City in appropriating \$312,648.19 toward the Museum support, the Trustees are obliged to report a deficit of \$273,526.82 in the cost of administration for the year. This cost was \$797,646.84 and the income from all sources applicable to administration purposes, including the city allowance, was \$524,120.02. The deficit was met partly out of private contributions and partly out of funds normally used for the purchase of works of art.

The expenses of running the Museum have increased annually since its foundation, along with its remarkable growth. Growth such as it has made is attended, of course, by proportionately increased expense; but the funds with which to meet this expense have not increased proportionately. The deficit reported each year is an expression of growth. The question confronting the Trustees is how to deal with the normal growth of the collections and the many ways of making them available and useful to the public. The purchase of objects out of trust funds should go on, gifts and bequests will continue to be received. Only in ways of service to the public does it lie within their power to

retrench, and such retrenchment would mean the stunting of a growth which bears good fruit. Surely neither the City nor the public, which reaps the benefits of the Museum, would consent to have this done

## A LOUIS XV PANELED ROOM

EVERY piece of decorative art to gain its full value should be seen only in its proper setting, in the place for which it was originally designed and in surroundings created by the same artistic impulse. The true significance of its design can become apparent only under these circumstances: This is especially true of the freer types of design whose strongly marked stylistic individuality will of necessity contrast violently with objects of a different genre and result in a discord which discredits both types. Here lies one of the major reasons for the disfavor in which the art of mid-eighteenth century France is held by many who know it only through scattered examples, having lacked the opportunity of seeing, as it were, a complete design unit.

It is to satisfy this need and to give an appropriate setting for a part of the Hoentschel Collection that the Museum, through the further generosity of J. Pierpont Morgan, has recently acquired the woodwork of a room of the period of Louis XV.<sup>1</sup> The paneling has been installed on the second floor of the Morgan Wing (fig. 1). In its original position the woodwork probably made the four walls of a room, but the exigencies of installation have necessitated a three-sided arrangement with the omission of the alcove enframing which is on exhibition close by. It is impossible to say just what the original arrangement was, but the presence of an alcove, about ten feet in width, would suggest that it was a bedroom. At the period, even among the lesser society, the latter was used largely for reception purposes, which would explain a treatment somewhat over-elaborate according to modern ideas, as may be seen by glancing

<sup>1</sup> It occupies an alcove 13 feet, 3 inches deep and 21 feet wide. The woodwork is 14 feet 1 inch high from floor to spring of cove.



FIG. 1. WOODWORK FROM A HOUSE IN THE RUE THORIGNY, PARIS

at any of the numerous engravings of domestic interiors published during the eighteenth century.

The woodwork comes from a house in the Rue Thorigny, Paris, which is said once

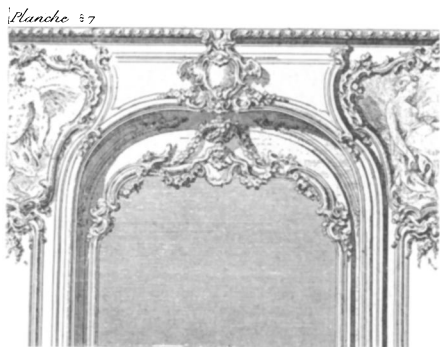


FIG. 2.

to have been in the possession of Madame de Pompadour. Thus it comes from the quarter of the Marais, occupied in general during the period by the lesser nobility

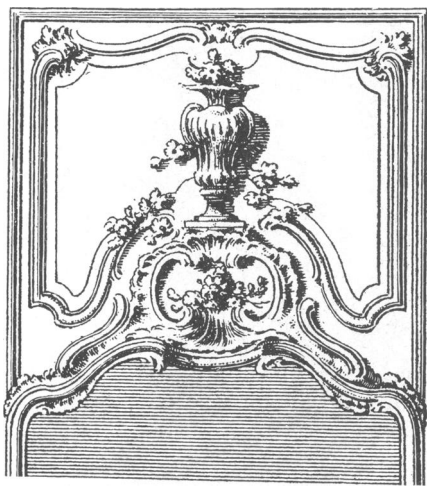


FIG. 3.

and the richer bourgeoisie, or upper middle class, and it was probably for a family of the latter class that the room was made, somewhere between the years 1740 and 1750. We cannot of course judge such a room by the ultimate standard of the

princely work at Versailles carried out by Verberckt and the brothers Rousseau, or even by the gorgeous decoration of the Hôtels de Rohan and Soubise in the same quarter. Too often, however, we are blinded by the superlative qualities of creations of this type, which are of course few in number, and fail to see and appreciate the quality of the work done to supply the needs of a slenderer purse and humbler taste. The new room is a good example of this latter type and shows to what a degree of excellence the better class of popular work had attained at this date, following in its own way the tradition and developing standard of the court.

The architects of the day furnished for the smaller work oftentimes but the slightest indication of the interior treatment of the rooms. These were completed by the "menuisier" who was both carpenter and carver, either from the verbal instructions of the designer or following his own invention stimulated by the various engraved designs published for this purpose. This free method tended to develop the individuality and judgment of the worker and is responsible in a great measure for the piquancy and unique charm of the work.

In this connection it is interesting to compare the present woodwork with the plates in the "*Traité du beau essentiel dans les arts*," by Charles Etienne Briseux,<sup>1</sup> published in 1752, probably somewhat after this room was completed. Of the two small reproductions given here, the more elaborate (fig. 2) is known to be from the above work, and shows a mirror-head treatment very close in both motive and design to the corresponding detail in the room (fig. 5). There is the same juxtaposition of short, crisp curves, a sparing use of the rocaille, and an almost identical garlanded vase with its supporting cartouche impinging on the glass of the mirror. The designer of the second of these two reproductions (fig. 3) is unfortunately unknown, though from the similarity of the

<sup>1</sup>Charles Etienne Briseux, architect and writer on architectural theory, born at Baume les Dames, Franche Comté, in 1680, died at Paris in 1754.



FIG. 4. DETAIL OF ROOM AS INSTALLED IN THE  
MORGAN WING OF THE MUSEUM

engraving and design, it might well be part of the same work. In general design this is even closer to the Museum example and is evidently the solution of an identical problem.

In nearly all the designs in this work of Briseux the same feeling of scale, of composition, and of design idea occurs, showing quite a characteristic individual style. This character, in its slight tendency to heaviness of ornament, occurs very evi-



FIG. 5. MIRROR-HEAD PANEL  
FROM THE LOUIS XV ROOM

dently in the major panels of the room and is perhaps one of the less agreeable features of the design. In its original state, however, with the mouldings picked out in gold against a light neutral tone background, this may not have been so apparent, as a strongly marked division between the glass and painted surfaces may have been necessary in the design. The rather unusual forms of the door-head and the overdoor panels, while finding no absolute parallel in the Briseux engravings, show clearly the same feeling and spirit. Internal evidence of this sort is rather slender basis to warrant a statement that Briseux was the architect, as similar forms and motives appear also in other contemporary engravings.<sup>3</sup> Such is not beyond the

bounds of probability, however, as Briseux was a practising architect, being known to have built a hôtel in the Montmartre district for the Fermier Général d'Augny, besides being the author of several architectural treatises which gave him considerable contemporary reputation.

While keeping the same feeling, the plates in Briseux's publication all show a style slightly more advanced than that of the room, and were probably the result of some years of previous experiment in practice, doing work which must have had a strong resemblance to that of the Museum acquisition and at the same time probably exercising a considerable influence over his contemporaries, both professional and craft. This seems sufficient justification in any case for placing the room in the style of Briseux as representative of the more restrained and architectonic school which opposed the excesses of Meissonnier and is far more typical of the general cultivated taste of the period.

From the standpoint of design alone a great deal can be learned from the study of such examples, where the essentials in the design are not obscured by elaborate detail. In this piece the delicate vigor of the work in the small panels, especially the pilaster strips, is worth careful examination. As in the best work of the period, harmony is obtained largely by the careful adjustment of curved lines of the same scale arranged in balanced series. Each design unit is thus composed of a number of opposed movements, no one overwhelming the other, but rather each converting its neighbor in turn, resulting in a whole static in effect but dynamic in quality. The subtlety and delicacy with which this idea is carried out forms the basis of excellence in all work of this period. The eye is led swiftly from point to point and never permitted to be bored, but on the other hand never permitted to be distressed by unmeaning violence.

M. R. R.